

We have these weapons stored in various locations around the country. Clearly, we want to dispose of the weapons. But now they are telling us it is going to take 40 years to dispose of them. It is a hole out there we are going to pour money into for 40 years. The estimate is a minimum cost of over \$27.5 billion. But, remember, that is up from what the original estimate was in 1985 of \$1.7 billion. So we go from \$1.7 to \$12.4 to \$15.1 to \$27.5. And now we are talking about 40 years.

These stockpiled munitions are, obviously, highly deadly. Their long-term viability is questionable. We simply cannot continue to postpone our responsibility to act on this program at this time. We have stockpiled munitions at nine sites, and here they are, Mr. President, with disposal facilities up and running at only two. The only two we have running are one out in the Hawaiian Islands, Johnston Atoll, out there, about 600 miles south of Hawaii, and recently, Tooele in Utah is up and running. These facilities are costing well over \$1 billion in Tooele, and the Johnston Island site is somewhere around \$1.3 billion or thereabouts.

It is interesting to note where we are. We are in Alabama, we are in Arkansas, we are in Colorado, we are in Maryland, we are in Kentucky, we are up here in Indiana, and, of course, we are in Umatilla, OR. Every State is sensitive, including the State of my friend, the Senator from Oregon. The reality is they want this removed from these various States where they exist. So the Department of Defense and the Pentagon and the appropriate committees have determined the best way to get rid of it is to build individual sites at each of the seven or eight—or actually potentially nine—sites, at a cost of over \$1 billion, and, once the material is disposed of, that terminates the facility because it is not beneficial for anything else.

However, it is interesting to note a couple of facts. In the Johnston Atoll, most of the material that is being incinerated there and disposed of came from NATO. It came from Europe. It was shipped across the ocean. Some of it came from Guam. That facility is functioning. It is underway. There is a prohibition about it taking any more. I can understand the sensitivity of the delegation from Hawaii, but, again, as we look at this catch-22 that we are in, I am just wondering, is it necessary that we build six new plants? Or, can we somehow look at some other alternatives? Is there a way to incinerate this at sea? We have built incinerating barges and facilities before quite successfully. Is there an advanced technology? What the Senator from Alaska has proposed is a study, a study to see if there is another and more beneficial return for the taxpayers of this country for the disposal of this weaponry.

In Oregon we have the adjacent coastline. In Aberdeen—in several of these areas we are not too far from the water. But each is very concerned

about shipping this material across another State to get it to a place where you can dispose of it. So we are in this round-robin here. Nobody wants the stuff. Everybody wants to get rid of it. Nobody wants it to cross their State line. Nobody wants to take any more. Nobody wants to accumulate it and reduce the cost. So we simply sit here and watch the costs go up to \$27 billion, we watch the time extended to up to 40 years, and we are being irresponsible by not allowing a study.

That is what my amendment would have done. It would have been to allow a study. However, because there is a prohibition even against a study, the conference and/or the committee itself is refusing to accept my amendment, which I can understand, given the sensitivity. I can understand how the process works around here. But I think we need to highlight how irresponsible we are in just ducking this issue and hoping that it will be resolved on somebody else's watch.

We have stockpiled these munitions at nine sites. We cannot, by laws that we passed, transport these munitions. So, you know, the alternative is to build these sites at more than \$1 billion each at the same time we continue to face permitting problems at every Federal site, every local level at the other seven sites, and a start date for construction seems to be extended on and on and on. The logic of the present disposal system really escapes me, and, as a consequence, I offered the amendment so we could take a rational look at what we are trying to accomplish with regard to this problem.

This again, Mr. President, is just a study. But in order to take a rational look at the program, it is imperative that all aspects of the program be considered so we can best evaluate how to proceed.

I hope the conferees on this bill will consider their responsibility and reconsider the Senate language which permits us an opportunity to take a second look. It does not demand that we do anything. It is not that we ship anything, not that we do not build these, it simply says, "Is there another, a better, a more efficient, cost-savings way?" I think there is. To suggest we are going to eliminate even the ability to take a look at this program, I think is terribly irresponsible on the part of those who bear the responsibility of addressing this, because this is just a study. What is the harm in looking at the problem?

I had proposed striking the prohibition against the study. We could always ask the inspector general for a study, and probably will. But I did want to take an opportunity to present before the Members the reality. This is something we cannot hide. We cannot overlook this. We have a responsibility to address it. We are spending huge amounts of money, and the public should recognize just what our alternatives are and face up to the fact that this was created as a consequence of

decisions made in the national defense interests of our Nation. We created this terrible nerve gas. I have seen the canisters it is in. I have seen how they dispose of it at Johnston Island and the manner in which it is taken into chambers where the explosive charge is removed, the gas is incinerated in one chamber in a closed cycle and the explosive material is taken in another chamber and incinerated. This was the development prototype.

But, here we are today faced with the inability to even look at a better way of disposal because of the sensitivity of this issue and the concern, if you do a study and you find a better way, it might suggest you might have to move it, and, therefore, you would have to move it across another State, and they don't want that to happen. So leave it where it is, simply build the plants and get on with it and spend God knows how many billions of dollars in the process.

So, you might say the Senator from Alaska is a little sensitive to the prohibition to even allow a study and an evaluation of a better way to meet our obligations to dispose of our chemical weapons.

You might say, "What in the world is the Senator from Alaska doing in this area?" Under the responsibility as chairman of the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, I have spent an awful lot of time on the merits of moving high-level nuclear waste across the United States at various sites over an extended period of time. Hundreds and hundreds of shipments have moved safely without incident. I am suggesting that we have the technology to move this lethal material to a place to dispose of it that is appropriate, even perhaps in a self-contained facility offshore that could contain the physical process of disposal at a much less cost.

With that, Mr. President, I simply make an appeal to my colleagues to recognize the extent of our responsibility to successfully dispose of our chemical weapons that have accumulated over a long period of time in a manner that is most responsible to the taxpayers, as well as safe, by using American ingenuity and technology.

Seeing no other Member on the floor, I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The bill clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. ROBERTS). Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGE OF THE FLOOR

Mr. ABRAHAM. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that a member of my staff, Dan Senor, be granted floor privileges as I make the brief remarks I am about to embark on.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.